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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 003122

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SUBJECT: COL. UMAR WARNS THAT OBASANJO MUST GO BY MAY 29

Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for reasons 1.5 (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Former Military Governor of Kaduna State Col. Abubakar Umar (rtd.), the Chairman of the Movement for Unity and Progress (MUP) told PolCouns recently that MUP and its partners would ensure that President Olusegun Obasanjo would leave office on May 29 regardless of Obasanjo's plans. He complained of the level of corruption throughout the Federal and State governments during Obasanjo's tenure and attacked the EFCC for being politically motivated in its haphazard attack on corruption. Umar is using his platform to pressure the National Assembly and the Judiciary to probe and punish corruption at the highest levels of the Nigerian government and may have found his calling as a pro-democracy/transparency lobbyist among some representatives from the northern reaches of Nigeria. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Former Military Governor of Kaduna State Col. Abubakar Umar (rtd.), the Chairman of the Movement for Unity and Progress (MUP) told PolCouns recently that MUP and its partners would ensure that President Olusegun Obasanjo would leave office on May 29 regardless of Obasanjo's plans. He said that Obasanjo, in his view one of the most corrupt leaders in Nigeria's history, was intent on manipulating the system because he feared investigation and incarceration after leaving office. "His attempt to amend the Constitution was a desperate attempt to cling to power for the remainder of his life," he said.

¶3. (U) Umar said that Obasanjo's tenure had been marked by massive government revenues and an "unprecedented" destitution among Nigeria's citizens. Given that, he claimed, Obasanjo's successor would at least have to ask Obasanjo about the missing revenues, the President's "inept handling" of social issues and his many legal transgressions.

¶4. (C) Umar pointed to an escalation of discontent and violence throughout the country and a growing bitterness and animosity towards politicians, especially those seen as supporting the President's attempt to extend his tenure. He said that Obasanjo had overseen an outbreak of hate and antagonism among Nigerians and had actively fostered ethnic, religious and sectional divides among the polity. Pointing to the crises that continue in the Niger Delta, Umar said that poor governance, misuse of revenues and the "clearly rigged" elections that foisted unpopular (and sometimes violent) politicians on the states would continue. "We have no hope of state intervention, so it will be up to the citizens of the area to demand credible candidates and ensure

the region's safety," he claimed.

¶15. (SBU) Umar speculated that the most "vicious attacks" by the Presidency were aimed at those with a chance of actually winning an election. He questioned the integrity of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), pointing out that the EFCC still declines to examine the books of the Ministry of Petroleum in spite of many apparent questionably activities in the Minsitry. He also pointed to the bribery allegations that hit the National Assembly when "millions of Naira" changed hands on May 10 and 11 in order to swing votes in favor of the Constitutional amendment allowing Obasanjo a third term. "Even with witnesses, vehicle IDs and the apparent transfer of cash into the cars of dozens of members of the National Assembly, (EFCC Chairman) Ribadu has said the EFCC does not have enough information to investigate," Umar lamented.

¶16. (U) Umar also highlighted the questionable transactions relating to Transcorp, including the transfer of national assets to the company in spite of the fact that Transcorp continued to violate the rules of the bid process and failed to meet the financial requirements used to screen other bidders. Even worse, he said, was the reported 600 million shares of Transcorp held by the President and members of his family. "How could he know that he held shares and that he sold 200 million of them from his so-called blind trust," Umar pointed out, musing whether perhaps it was Nigerians that were blind instead.

¶17. (U) In pushing for the President to leave office, Umar said that the National Assembly and the Judiciary needed to apply their powers resolutely to salvage Nigeria's democracy. He claimed that MUP, in cooperation with other civil society

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organizations and political parties, was prepared to "ensure a handover on May 29, 2007, regardless of the the machinations of Obasanjo and the PDP regime." He said he had been urging the National Assembly to probe the corrupt activities of both the President and the Vice President and to "mete out appropriate punishment" for both of them.

¶18. (C) COMMENT: Umar is well reckoned as a social critic and gained considerable public support during the Babangida regime when he resigned from the Military rather than cooperate with the annulment of the June 12 elections. While he is known as a speaker, his efforts have generally been limited to criticism rather than action. Still, as a lobbyist among the corridors of power, he may yet find his calling as he searches for a solution to Nigeria's political morass.

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